

caedmon
TC 1543

JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH

abridged

read by the author

ROALD DAHL



L+A Dillon

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Side A	30:18
Side B	32:08

You are about to hear what happens when a small boy named James Henry Trotter is plucked by cruel fate from the perfect childhood ("living peacefully with his mother and father in a beautiful house beside the sea") and plunked into a most dreadful, orphaned state as the unwilling ward of two horrifying relatives, Aunts Sponge and Spiker.

These nearest, dearest of kin, one fat and the other thin, are selfish, lazy and cruel. What's more, they think nothing of "beating poor James for almost no reason at all." In the four dreary years he has been living with them, James has never heard either aunt laugh aloud.

Luckily, a magical gift from a little old man "in a crazy dark green suit" promises to cause "marvelous, fabulous and unbelievable things" to happen to James. Alas, an unfortunate accident makes them happen not to James, but to an old peach tree in the middle of the aunt's scruffy garden, instead. All is not lost, however, for when the most mouth-wateringly glorious peach ever seen in the south of England suddenly bursts forth, our young hero is off and rolling in one of the most delectable escape fantasies in contemporary children's books.

The two greedy aunts, quite naturally, propose to share the luscious fruit between them — until they notice that, quite unnaturally, it is continuing to grow before their eyes. Once the peach becomes as tall as the tree that bore it (and as big as a small house), James discovers a boy-sized hole in its soft, furry exterior. Crawling deep inside, he enters a door in the peachstone to find himself inside a room containing a Grasshopper as large as a dog and — in equally grand scale — a companionable Spider, Ladybug, Centipede, Earthworm, Glowworm and Silkworm. This unlikely octet frees the fruit from its stem-mooring and proceeds by land, sea and air — with plenty of hairbreadth escapes and high-spirited nonsense songs en route — to make a near-miraculous overnight crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. Fame and fortune await them all, where else but in New York City.

The trip, of course, could never have been made without James's ingenious harnessing of seagull power to lift the peach above the waiting jaws of a pack of hungry sharks; nor would it have ended to happily had James not performed a breathtaking feat of aerial derring-do in rescuing Centipede from the briney deep.

Like his own small hero, Roald Dahl, the author of *James and the Giant Peach*, crossed the Atlantic a bit more conventionally during World War II in order to take up duties as Britain's Assistant Air Attaché in Washington, D. C. The fame and fortune he found was literary, however, rather than picaresque. Mr. Dahl became the author of two perennially popular books for children (the tale here recorded in mildly abbreviated form, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*)*, among other works for the young, and a large number of memorable adult short stories — usually with a surreal bent. He is also responsible for the movie scripts of both a James Bond thriller, *You Only Live Twice*, and the children's film, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

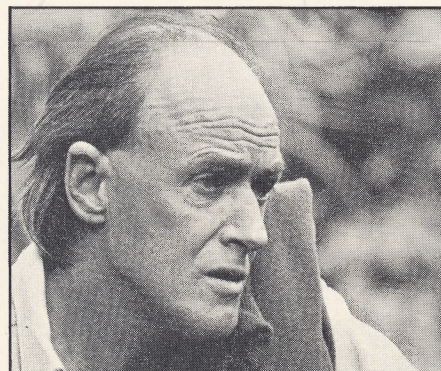
Born in 1916 of Norwegian parents, Mr. Dahl grew up close to the sea, in Llandaff, Wales. He and his wife, the American actress Patricia Neal, are the parents of four

children and live today in Buckinghamshire, England. "I write children's books primarily for my own children," Mr. Dahl once told an interviewer. As to why an outsized Earthworm, Centipede and other insects share stage center with his plucky hero, Dahl explains: "Everyone has written about bunnies and ducks and bears and moles and rats and everything else . . . so I said: 'Well I must try and find some animals or creatures or something that are different.'" And this he has surely done in a saga sufficiently suspenseful and fantastic to hold in its thrall the most jaded child of our TV age. A highly opinionated author, Mr. Dahl sees his ideal audience as children between the ages of six and ten, "because after that age they ought to be reading proper adult books." Certainly James's incredible adventure is likely to give listening to — and reading — books a good name.

Selma G. Lanes

Selma G. Lanes, author of *DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE: Adventures and Misadventures in the Realm of Children's Literature*, is a critic and editor of children's books.

*See also Caedmon's recordings of *CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY* Read by Roald Dahl (TC 1476) and *THE GREAT SWITCHEROO* Read by Patricia Neal (TC 1545).



Roald Dahl lives in England with his actress-wife Patricia Neal and their four children. He is the author of forty-three celebrated short stories, many film-scripts, and several of the most widely read children's books written including *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *The Magic Finger*, *Charlie and the Glass Elevator*, and *Danny: The Champion of the World*.

Leo and Diane Dillon are the husband and wife team who have illustrated many Caedmon covers as well as a great number of children's books. They won the Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished picture book for children, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, in 1976.

CREDITS:

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Ronald Dahl
JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH
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TC 1543-A

Side 1
30:18

Read by the author

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LONG PLAYING • 33 1/3 RPM
MICROGROOVE

STEREO INTENDED FOR
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Ronald Dahl
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TC 1543-B

Side 2
32:08

Read by the author

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